



The high-density land use development pattern in the District can support higher levels of bicycle transportation. More than 570,000 residents live on only 61 square miles of land in the District—more than 9,000 people per square mile⁶. There are more than 650,000 payroll jobs in DC, and most are located in the central business district⁷. The downtown office, commercial, and residential buildings are spread over a wide area. Approximately 500,000 jobs are distributed from Foggy Bottom to the Southwest Waterfront and from L'Enfant Plaza to the Convention Center, covering an area of approximately six square miles. Trips in the downtown area are often too far to walk and difficult to drive due to traffic congestion and scarce parking. Bicycling is often the fastest way to travel downtown.

National statistics show that bicycle commuting in the District is higher than most major cities in the United States (see Table 1. Bicycle Commuting in Selected U.S. Cities), but still much lower than other capital cities in the world (see Table 2. Bicycle Commuting in Selected World Capitals). The new bicycle facilities and programs recommended in this plan can help the District achieve even higher levels of bicycling.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. State and County Quickfacts, Online: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/11000.html>, 2004.

⁷ Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000.

Table 1. Bicycle Commuting in Selected U.S. Cities⁸

City	Bicycle Mode Share
Madison, WI	3.19%
San Francisco, CA	1.98%
Seattle, WA	1.88%
Portland, OR	1.76%
Washington, DC	1.16%
Philadelphia, PA	0.86%
Los Angeles, CA	0.61%
Chicago, IL	0.50%
New York, NY	0.47%
Houston, TX	0.46%
Baltimore, MD	0.33%
Nationwide Average (includes suburban and rural)	0.38%

Table 2. Bicycle Commuting in Selected World Capitals^{9,10}

City	Bicycle Mode Share
Amsterdam, Netherlands	50%+
Beijing, China	48%
Tokyo, Japan	25%
Moscow, Russia	24%
Copenhagen, Denmark	20%
London, United Kingdom	3%
Ottawa, Canada	1.92%

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. State and County Quickfacts, Online: http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTGeoSearchByListServlet?ds_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U&_lang=en&_ts=93199688005, 2004.

⁹ International Bicycle Fund. Online: www.ibike.org/statistics.

¹⁰ Transport for London. *Transport Statistics for London, 2001*. Online: www.transportforlondon.gov.uk/tfl/pdffdocs/stats2001.pdf

While these conditions provide a firm foundation for bicycling, bicycle transportation improvements are needed in many parts of the District. According to District bicyclists, building bikeways is the most effective way to encourage bicycling in the District. (This was chosen by 59 percent of 258 respondents to an informal survey; no other response had more than 10 percent.) According to one District resident, "Traffic is too heavy, pavement is too rough, and there is no space for bikes." An average of 270 bicycle crashes is reported to police every year. Though crash reports tend to underestimate the total number of bicycle crashes, this still represents approximately two percent of all reported crashes in the District.

There is an average of 270 crashes involving bicyclists every year in the District. Bicycling accounts for about 1 percent of trips, but 2 percent of all crashes in the District.

Additional barriers to bicycling include:

- Inadequate space for bicycling on downtown streets
- Busy arterial roadways with high-speed traffic
- No visible bike facilities on most roadways
- Curbside management issues (double-parking, tour bus parking, trucks loading in bike lanes, etc.)
- Complex intersections with vehicles turning in many directions
- Freeway ramp crossings
- Potholes, roadway debris and other road surface problems
- Narrow, crumbling, and/or debris-filled bicycle trails
- Poor access to bridge sidewalks
- Conflicts with buses
- Deteriorating bike route signs
- Unmarked bike routes
- Scarce bicycle parking in some areas, especially near schools and universities
- Limited understanding and respect for bicyclists among taxi, bus, and other drivers
- Limited awareness of potential bicycle opportunities among residents and visitors

Benefits of Bicycling

Encouraging greater bicycle travel in the District will bring many benefits to residents and visitors. These benefits are summarized below.

Traffic Relief

Increasing bicycle travel reduces the number of motor vehicles on District of Columbia roadways. Improving intersections, completing bicycle paths, and providing more paved shoulder space and bike lanes will provide convenient transportation options for the growing DC population.



A bicycle takes up ¼ of the space of a car and is faster for most urban trips than driving or transit.



A motor vehicle is the second-highest household expense. Bicycling provides a cost-efficient means of travel for residents and visitors.

Environmental Benefits

The primary source of air pollution in the metropolitan Washington region is auto emissions. Motor vehicles are also a source of pollution in the Anacostia River, one of the most polluted rivers in the United States. Substituting bicycling trips for short auto trips will reduce the amount of pollutants generated by automobiles in the District.

The District and surrounding metropolitan region is classified as a severe non-attainment area for ground level ozone by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Cycling 8 miles prevents 15 lbs. of air pollutants from contaminating the air. Bike travel already reduces automotive pollution by 1 percent nationally and saves an estimated 700 million gallons of fuel annually.

Economic Benefits

A motor vehicle is the second-highest household expense, after housing itself¹¹. The option of bicycling can improve the mobility of the 275,000 District residents without access to a car and allow some households to own one vehicle instead of two. Pairing bike facility improvements with programs such as car-sharing gives residents more transportation choices.

Bicycling can also help bring tourist dollars into the city. Active vacations are one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourist industry. Bicycling also allows tourists to travel more quickly between sites and enables the District to better tap into the buying power of the 18 million tourists who often limit their DC visit to the National Mall and monuments.



Approximately 18 million tourists visit the District of Columbia each year. Bicycling allows tourists to explore the National Mall and beyond without having to walk long distances or be tied to a bus schedule.

Health Benefits

Increased levels of bicycling will improve the health of District residents. Biking to the store, school or work provides a time-efficient, low-cost way of attaining the U S Surgeon General's recommended daily allowance of physical activity. Bicycle exercise can help reduce heart disease, diabetes, and other chronic illnesses among District residents.

¹¹ Surface Transportation Policy Project. "Housing and Transportation," Online, www.transact.org/library/factsheets/housing.asp#_ednref1, February 23, 2004.